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The Reckoning

featuring:

Danica Chappell

Kel Glaister

Tamsin Green

Jackie McNamee

Darren Farquhar

Jessica Harrison

Jonathan Owen

Derek Sutherland

THE RECKONING

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Introduction

TAMSIN GREEN & JACKIE McNAMEE

—

When you set out to make an exchange, you proceed in a spirit of optimism, even if what you hope to give and to get takes place under the auspices of doom, as in *The Reckoning*. These artists from Melbourne, Australia, and Edinburgh, Scotland, have set out to respond to the notion of threat, but also to respond to the challenge of the exchange, to compare ideas and approaches and methods. The responses to the theme have been as varied and diverse as one might expect from a transnational exhibition.

Some of the works stand up like a marker in the road; the inverted grave *Infinity from the other end (don't worry)* marks clearly the extent of our engagement with *The Reckoning*. The reckoning could mean paying the bill, or it could imply measuring how long until the bill must be paid. The grave is a clear marker on our account. Other works in this exchange require you to bend right down before any threat can be detected. Jess Harrison's small suite of domestic objects are sweetly familiar. They are reminiscent, at first, of a childhood world, but then reveal a more uncanny content. Their variety extends from the coolly reflective, the tongue-in-cheek and the seemingly comical, to pieces that require minute examination to determine the artist's hand, and the explosive extrusions of a possibly overloaded brain.

This exchange has produced more than a collaborative exhibition. Links have been forged between the two organisations, Kings ARI in Australia and Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop in Scotland, and, for the artists, travelling to and

working in a new environment, there will remain the profound and lasting consequences of seeing, talking, absorbing.

The experience of the exchange has been beneficial to us all, for we all face a common threat; whether in the long or the short term, our works prepare themselves for a reckoning.

The Reckoning: A Romance

FIONA MACDONALD

Illumination in the bunker:

Here in the world of darkness, we keep bunker watch. In this darkness, bunker architecture no longer visible, skin grazes concrete; fingerpads creep along the long straight walls, sides of rectangular negative spaces inserted into the ground. Safe, dark, we choose to stay here. The others have gone back up to the top. They believed it is lighter up there, doom passed over up there, they wanted to account for it, they said; they want to account themselves, they thought they could do that there. They have gone up there in the gathering herd, to count themselves off, to count themselves in; no singular accountability anymore.

No need for eyes down here; all hapticity. Orifices now, lips, extra lips for facing off the straight hard length, the rectangle, feeling my way along its grain, licking, sucking, extracting drops of fluid, laughing—more mouths to laugh with. Kiss me earth.

Who can know if it's lighter up there? Nuclear winter; here endless night, there the gloaming.

Up there in the world of warfare they will meet you at the map reference; they figure it out point to point. They carry arms to unitise you, tie you up and refashion you into articulated modules. In the warfare you will win the gauntlets of the windreacher; these will bind you, increase your spell power. I too have arms, my helmet is a paper bag; no need for sight. From here I have already counted you, summed you up, I know your extent. I can erect you, add you up to a long penile trajectory, a useless thing, a thing of dazzlement. Up there, in the machine of separation they dazzle you with light. All is light.

Up there, they are the celibate machine now, the dazzling futility that lights the world, powers the screen, rendering all visible to the machine of the articulated penis.

Up there, in the endless day of dazzlement, the herd stands blinded, waiting for the cloud to come.

Travel to the other side, to the antipodes. Be as flippant as you dare. Kill the albatross. Take to the ocean, sail to utopian knowledge, to singular identity, the last refuge. Die of thirst along the way, drift, vanish; oceanic feeling long departed as signification. Outside there are boxes of nothing, imploding into vacuums. Meaning has departed the outside; the outside is now all the gathering herd. Nothing fills the time of waiting; ozone death, herd gasping for air.

I am Saint Ignatius: no images in my eyes, only the negation of image lives in my imagination. Reflections without light detach narcissism from its subject, floating free, detached from knowledge. I am active in my vigilant exclusion. Weeks, moments, millennia, repulsing images—all vigilance. I am neophyte, mystic speech and impure blood. I see from the grave. In the darkness, illumination is all interiority; no markers on the outside anymore, no reifying structures, meaning is detached from its signs, all rotten and catalysed. Babylon cometh. All is ruins.

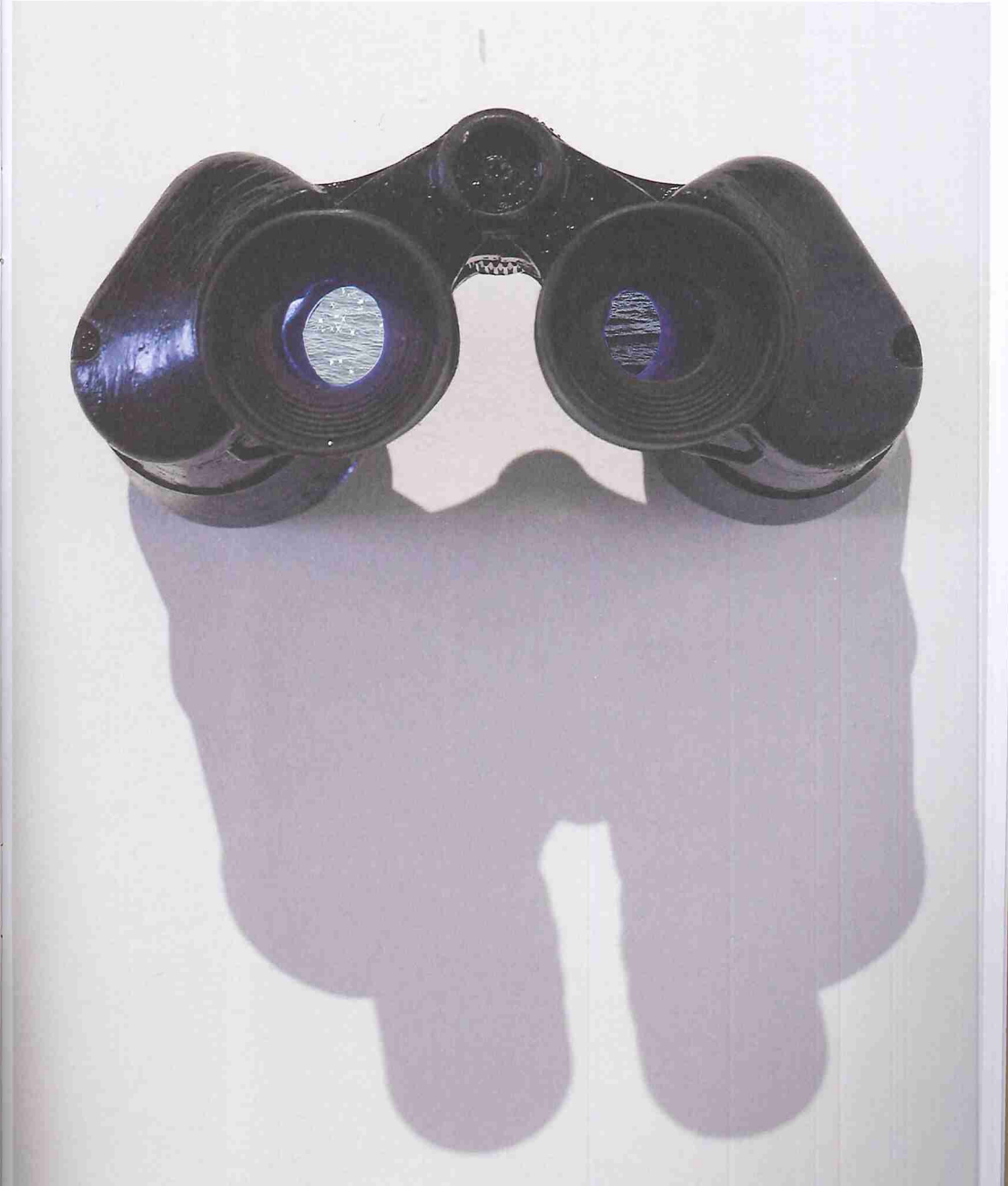
I am the cloven one; all split open, visceral clinging to surfaces, counting grain-by-grain, earth, stone. Sightless and riven, all open to the outside, I am the interior hidden in its own openness. I hide in plain sight.

Year Zero:

Prosthetics now substitute for eyes, not as a vision machine but as a relaxation machine—the ocean is here in the machine to





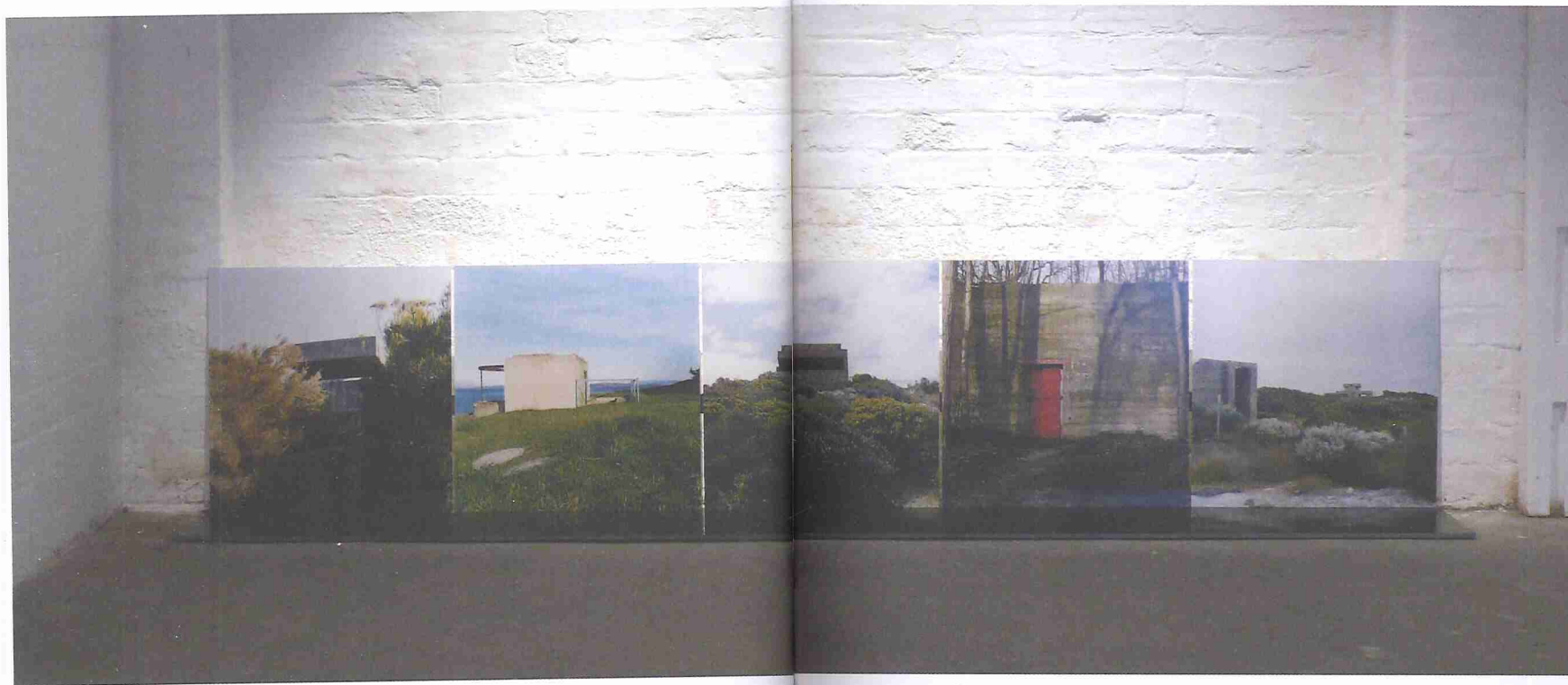














substitute for looking. The exercise of binocular separation, its unitary deterritorialisation of ocean—ocean of the north, ocean of the south—deploys a line of flight to the white wall-black hole of the image. What can be seen in the prosthetic is only the exhaustion of the anterior of the image as experience—there is no real site of ocean, what remains as visibility is the image as a set of artifice. Here, in this set of artifice, through the meaningless signification of the relaxation machine, re-territorialisation is produced as the oceans recombine in the internal opacity of the body, in the sightless volume where lines of flight resolve into interior vision. Oceanic vision.

Face and landscape are the same pedagogical machines, factories for the production of specific relations—of gaze, of territorialisation, sites of spiritual control. What happens to a formalism when it is unformed, reformed, fashioned into crafted dysfunction? Form follows function into the black hole of faciality. Form is now landscape, something to be seen in close-up, screen-like to gaze at, or all haptic-like with the sightless eyes of bunker knowledge. This deformed formality is on the outside, up there in the gathering herd. It is nothing useful to them, but can inhabit their space, territorialising in turn, and also in league—an alliance of abdicated responsibility. Form not functioning has its place in herd reckoning, it is not a singular accounting, it multiplies and collapses back to the white wall.

Black holes operate through binarisation and are in constant movement. The white wall that identifies them renders them visible and operates as their face. At the same time the white wall reflects them, a process of co-dependant material identification. This figure/ground relationship that reproduces

itself as signification and clones itself as multiplicity inaugurates distance in all its manifestations. Bunker space is white wall and black hole. It reterritorialises through reciprocity, first wall, then hole, systematising both as interiority: a faciality of the inside, a topology of self-reflection.

Reckoning:

This exhibition is about producing time; a time delay, a jet lag of sorts that defers, holds off the moment of doom. It does this by an accounting: a relaying of its production into social time where it counts off—bicycle revolutions, video loops, chains of dysfunction; or by delaying its subjectivities into interior time—its seeing from the grave, its counting of cells and granules of dirt. It is a reckoning, a doomsday taxonomy, but a reckoning on a future nonetheless. As such it is also an investment, a reterritorialising time management system to inhabit a future, even one ruptured and toxic.

The works are telematic; they reterritorialise the distances and separations of apperception. They do this by constructing illumination machines and through acts of discontinuity, seen in the singular counting, cell-by-cell, grain-by-grain. Insofar as the exhibition represents the trace of a journey, south to north, north to south, it is a phantasm of a journey; what we are presented with are surface remains, ruins, narcissistic reflections. Surface knowledge. Scratch that surface and the black hole appears in its dominion: the white wall of the gallery space revealed as the surface of holes that it is, a mined out rabbit field useless for continuity and tunneled into a zone where, traveling blind, we wait for productive time to collapse.

The Lighthouse Complex

STUART BENNETT

—

Perhaps my main preoccupation as a maker and teacher of sculpture is the omnipresent issue of scale. The early sense of the fabric of our environment quickly alters as we grow, the tools we use to work and communicate shrink to the lowest ergonomic denominator and global communication networks allow personal, often tenuous bonds to be internationally acknowledged.

The structural anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss said: 'When we alter scale we sacrifice the sensible in favour of the intelligible'.

The architectural scale of a working lighthouse is derived from the natural world and how we see it, topography and the human eye. The brick, cast iron and concrete repository of this lighthouse was once a store for the Fresnel lenses, lanterns and bulbs that shone, warned and helped navigate those nearing the Scottish coastline.

In June 2009, this stark environment became an arcadia of unsettling, edgy, querulous objects, images, constructions and actions. Effacing and voluble, the emitting messages were diverse and different but the conversation had a focus. These disruptions of our standard measurements and calibrations allow us to disregard routine functionality, the sensible, and allow us to focus on the voice in the work, the intelligible.

Something from outside is inside, inside out. Turn round to see through to a sea view. Words are missing. House(hold) objects (house)hold corporeal period features. Elegant violence morphs a table leg into a chain. We see the underside

and outside of what we expect; scale is altered and distance challenged.

There is a disintegrated preservation and apocalyptic dystopia but no hand wringing or anxiety, just a curious sense of mocking acceptance of the inevitable calling to task. A sinister sense of unexpected, exotic, doomed and failing futures make me smile. I don't find it funny but I think I've joined the conversation. There is unseen, acknowledged danger outside but in here I'm protected. It might have something to do with how we communicate. This disrupts me. A tiny tensile strengthened vest offers little protection.

Islands have edges, need protection and require warning systems. Despite social networking they are insular and culturally endemic. *The Lighthouse Complex* acknowledges this and provides light, black humour, focus and scatter vision. Nothing is as it seems, we are all peripheral but implicit. What have we done? Why are we doing this? Will it change anything? What will happen? How much do we care?

As I write I consider scale again, the hardware of this written communication. This type needs to go to Australia. It is flat and standard and my fingers are moving around routinely to provide a record or account that makes sense. And is sensible. You know what to expect from this catalogue essay. It is a collection of words that takes more time to digest than the images. It is an acceptable size and font. I doubt it is intelligible next to the scaled down images of sculptures, images and actions.

If only one could traverse these words, move them around, (dis)believe them and re-arrange, spend more time with one and less with others. The flat page or screen is no friend to makers. Where is the haptic, phenomenological

interaction? This information is ocular and edited. Don't trust it, it is a standard size, looks like all the other words and travels quickly and invisibly. Put faith in the concrete work, spend time with it, make up your own mind, use your own lens. Don't revert to type.

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This catalogue is published on the occasion of the showing of *The Reckoning* at Kings ARI, Melbourne, Australia, 4-26 September 2009. *The Reckoning* has been an international exchange between Kings ARI and the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. The first iteration of *The Reckoning* was shown 13-28 June 2009 at Sierra Metro Gallery, a not-for-profit artist-run gallery space housed in a disused lighthouse in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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